

New College Worcester

New College, 2 Whittington Road, Worcester WR5 2JX

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

New College Worcester is a non-maintained special school that provides education and care for young people who are blind or partially sighted, who are aged between 11 and 19 years old, and who are able to access the national curriculum and progress to study beyond age 16. There are currently 71 young people on roll. 63 young people are residential on a termly or weekly basis. While all young people have visual impairment, some also have additional needs. Young people stay in three residential houses and a hostel. All residential accommodation is located on campus. The residential provision was last inspected in March 2017.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 March 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 8 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Young people experience excellent care that enables them to flourish socially, educationally and physically.
- The whole school ethos of support and encouragement means that every young person is able to reach their full potential.
- The leadership team is ambitious and energetic, and continuously looks at different ways to improve young people's residential experience.
- Young people feel safe, protected and valued by staff that they trust and respect.
- Feedback from young people and their parents is excellent.
- Young people develop confidence and self-esteem because of the residential experience.
- Young people learn essential independence skills and feel more equipped for the future.
- Integrated work is commonplace.
- The welfare of young people is always the staff team's top priority.
- Managers and staff undertake a wide range of training and development that informs their day-to-day practice.
- All national minimum standards are met.

The residential special school's areas for development:

- The residential facilities in the sixth form hostel require some refreshment.
- The bathroom and shower facilities in the residential houses require some improvement.
- Young people feedback should help to inform the staff appraisal process.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Continue to make improvements to the facilities in the sixth form hostel.
- Make improvements to the bath and shower facilities in the residential houses.
- Ensure that young people's feedback benefits the staff appraisal process.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people make fantastic progress. This is achieved due to the whole school approach towards young people's welfare and development. The residential staff are extremely nurturing and supportive of each young person. Young people and their parents readily identify the benefits gained from young people's residential experiences. One young person told the inspector, 'I have learnt so much from being here. One of the main things is becoming more independent, and I am really looking forward to the future now. I have so many opportunities ahead.'

Young people enjoy a fabulous range of activities. They have a stimulating and enjoyable day-to-day life. For example, some young people have just returned from a trip to Spain. Staff make sure that at weekends young people have lots of opportunities to pursue interests and hobbies, and to access the wider community. As a result, young people never get bored of things to do.

Young people and staff take every opportunity to have fun together and to celebrate the smallest of achievements.

Young people are empowered to contribute ideas and suggestions for the development of the residential service. For example, young people have made suggestions about how the school's complaints policy could be improved so that it is accessible to all. Twelve young people gave feedback about the school's revised mental health policy. This shows that young people invest in the school community and they know that their views and opinions matter.

Staff carefully track each young person's progress. Young people all receive support to help them to develop essential life skills they need to progress towards their independence. For example, staff ensure that independence plans are individually tailored. Staff and young people then work tirelessly together to ensure that goals are achieved. A parent told the inspector, 'She has achieved so much. The care side has helped her to blossom, and she has come into her own. She cooks more for herself, and her self-confidence has improved massively.'

Staff practice includes research-based practice. For example, staff have secured research resources on safeguarding young people. These include understanding the dangers of online grooming, and supporting young people's mental health in secondary schools. A current focus for staff is on helping young people who have difficulties with going to sleep. Staff have adopted ideas from a research paper and incorporated the research into training. Staff and young people also contributed to a recent review of life in residential special schools. This ongoing commitment to applying research to practice means that staff practice is continually evolving to meet the needs of all young people.

Young people's healthcare benefits because of the effective communication between staff, young people, parents and healthcare professionals. A parent told the inspector, 'Staff have worked brilliantly with us about his healthcare. I know that he is in safe hands.'

Throughout young people's residential stays, they receive a high level of support in all areas of their development. Young people move to the sixth form hostel when older, with a continued focus on the development of their daily living skills. They receive considerable advice and support from a variety of professionals in planning their move from the school, including support for university placements and job applications.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Safeguarding arrangements continue to be thorough. The designated safeguarding lead ensures that staff follow procedures and that safeguarding matters are appropriately dealt with. Individual risk assessments are regularly revisited and updated. Young people take on appropriate age-related risks. For example, staff assist and supervise young people with their independence skills until they are confident and capable. This has helped young people to be safe in making their own hot drinks and meals.

Strong governance ensures that safeguarding practice is monitored and reviewed. Senior staff regularly meet with the safeguarding governor to review safeguarding incidents and to ensure that policies and procedures are fit for purpose. Managers are revising the school's mental health policy. There is currently a whole school approach to improve the understanding of all members of staff regarding young people's mental health needs.

Young people demonstrate excellent behaviour because of the positive relationships, trust and sense of security they have with staff. Staff adopt a positive approach to managing difficulties, using incentives and rewards to encourage and maintain a helpful attitude from young people. Sanctions are rare. Young people are considerate and helpful towards each other. One young person told the inspector, 'We are all equal here. Before I came here, I used to be bullied, but not now. Sometimes there are disagreements, but they are sorted out.'

There have been no incidents of young people being at risk of radicalisation or sexual exploitation. All staff have received training so that they know the steps to take if they have any concerns. There have been no incidents of young people going missing from school, or being absent without agreement. The school site is safe and secure. Staff ensure that they chaperone all visitors.

The premises and grounds are well maintained and repairs are speedily undertaken,

when necessary. The recruitment process is thorough, and all staff working with young people are suitably vetted. These measures help to keep young people safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The head of care, school principal and senior leadership team work together to achieve excellent outcomes for young people attending the residential provision. In line with their statement of purpose, staff have an ambitious vision for all young people. The inclusive atmosphere means that there is continuous communication between managers, residential staff, teachers and others, with the young people's safety and progress in mind.

Staff are experienced and knowledgeable. Many have worked at the school for a number of years. They are clear about their roles and understand the aims and ethos of the residential provision.

Equality and diversity issues thread through all areas of the school. Staff value and respect all young people. One young person told the inspector, 'There is no bias here.' Managers review sanctions, and ensure that they are fair to all. Staff are child-focused and have an aspirational attitude towards the young people's achievements. Young people are emboldened as all staff have a 'can-do' attitude and encourage young people to have the same. Staff told the inspectors that they are well supported. They said that they are prepared for their roles, and receive regular supervision and a broad range of training.

Managers are responsive to providing staff training that reflects young people's individual needs. This includes training to help improve staff understanding of autistic spectrum disorder, anxiety and self-harm.

Managers value the scrutiny from the independent visitor and from governors. Managers also review and self-evaluate the service, identifying where improvements can be made. The information provided is used to drive up standards further. Young people's records evidence the progress they make because of attending school, including the impact of the seamless approach to daily living and independence skills. Managers challenge other professionals when young people do not receive essential services. For example, one young person had not received help from a local mental health service. Following intervention from staff, this was provided.

Managers are aware of the areas for development, including developing young people's care plans so that they streamline information about their needs.

Managers have met the areas of improvement identified at the last inspection. They have improved some areas of the sixth form hostel, and some young people's bedrooms now have an en-suite facility. Staff have had training in mental health and self-harm. The staff have improved the recording of young people's records kept in

school and the residential houses. Qualifications of therapists are correctly recorded.

This inspection identified three areas for improvement. Although the majority of the residential provision is a vibrant and homely place for young people, some areas do need more attention. These include some of the bathroom and shower areas, which have an institutional feel. Some parts of the sixth form hostel need further attention to maintain a comfortable and warm environment for young people. Managers can consider threading young people's feedback through staff annual appraisals, thus providing an extra area of feedback.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC043048

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Nicola Ross

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Julia Wright, social care inspector (lead)
Sandra King, social care inspector



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